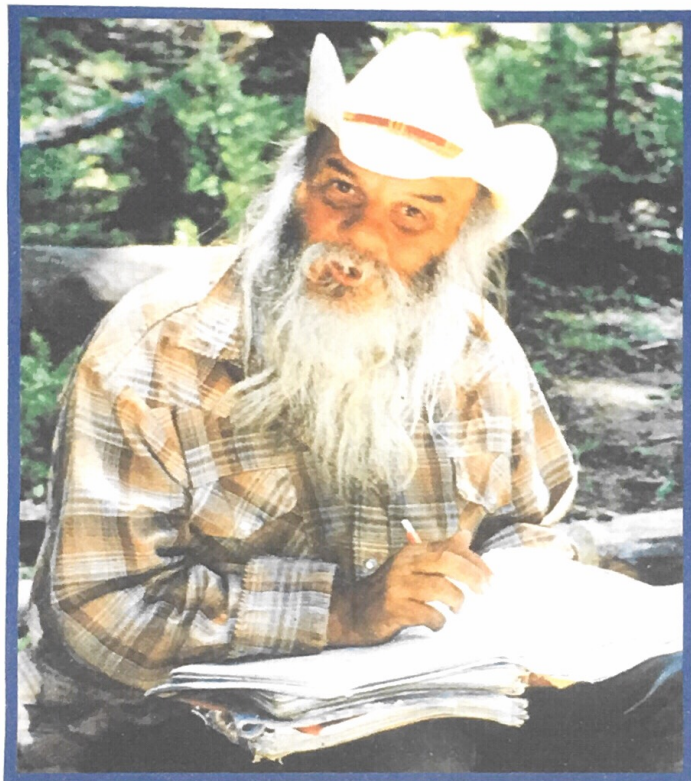




# Rainbow Family Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.  
Interviews with Rainbow  
Family of Living Light  
folks conducted between  
1977 and 2008.*

*Scanned in 2018.*

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FEATHER "Herstory"

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I was born in 1947 in Baltimore. I have two older brothers. My dad is an engineer. He builds bridges and dams - now he even builds nuclear power plants. Both my parents were college graduates. My mother worked as a secretary before she got married.

I think I had a very happy childhood. We went to church, but we didn't discuss spiritual things in the family. But there was a very strong emphasis on right moral behavior - not stealing, and being honest and truthful and do unto others as you would have them do unto you. My parents also valued education very highly. I made pretty good grades and my brothers made real good grades and went to a special polytechnic high school.

I've always been very interested in art since I was very small. My parents encouraged me and sent me to art school on Saturdays. When I was in high school, I had visions of going to France and studying art in college as an exchange student.

Spiro Agnew was the president of our PTA. I knew his daughter. She stole my boyfriend in the ninth grade. My parents are both staunch Republicans. My father was PTA president the year after Agnew was.

When I was 13 or 14 I rejected the teachings of my parents' church. They were Episcopalians. I made C plus on my confirmation exam and I didn't want to be a C-plus Christian. I was pretty much of an atheist.

My junior year in high school I met Mike. He was a singer in a rock and roll band. On our first date we went to a band job. The Beatles were just beginning to be popular. At the end of the school year, I got pregnant. I tried taking ten aspirin, drinking a bottle of club soda and soaking in a bath as hot as I could stand it. Somebody told me that would make me miscarry. I'm glad I didn't.

I was afraid to tell my parents, so Mike and I borrowed his friend's sister's car and borrowed money and clothes from friends.



of ours. We ended up in South Miami Beach in the Puerto Rican ghetto. We were staying in a \$12 a week motel with prostitutes. I saw my first lesbian, who was making eyes at me. I asked Mike, "What's the matter with that man?"

"That's not a man. Keep walking."

We tried to get jobs, but the only job experience I had was lettering tombstones. And Mike didn't even have his driver's license. We tried to get married, but we weren't able to because we didn't have enough money to go to a doctor and get verification that I was pregnant. Otherwise we were too young to get married. So finally we called up our friends in Baltimore that we'd borrowed the car from and they said that our parents were going crazy looking for us. So we called them up and they flew down to bring us some clothes and see how we were doing.

We made a mistake. We went back to Baltimore with my parents, where they immediately found out we weren't married. They knew I was pregnant, but they were dead set against us getting married. They made me go home with them, but they let Mike and I see each other.

They wanted me to go to a home for unwed mothers. But when we got to the Florence Crittenden Home for Unwed Mothers in Washington DC, I freaked out. It was just a stone prison with barred windows and sad pregnant girls walking up and down the hall. Oh God, it was awful! There was the old stepmother in charge. You could only see your parents at certain hours and never see the father of the child. The child would be put up for adoption. I decided against it. I cried all the way home for an hour and a half.

So Mike's mother when she was drunk said we could



live at her place. So after many family discussions involving all my relatives, which went on for a month, Mike had to have a serious talk with my brothers and my uncles. But we finally got married. For our honey moon, I borrowed a friend's ID cards and we went to a motel in Washington DC for five days. We went to night clubs and got drunk every night and stayed in bed all day and wouldn't let the maid in to change the sheets.

We stayed together for a year and a half. On March 3, 1965, our daughter was born and we named her Tracy. Tracy was a beautiful baby, a double Pisces and Aries. The hospital was like prison. They wouldn't let Mike see me at all. But that's a whole book in itself.

Mike started spending more and more time out late night at bars and eventually had a girlfriend. We tried to get back together but it just didn't work, so we separated. I started working as a commercial artist for Bendix. The divorce took a year and a half. The whole scene at Bendix was I was the only woman in the art department. Most of them were middle-aged men bored and dissatisfied. Here I was, disillusioned with the whole thing, wanting more of a Father figure. But I ended up at 18 going out with bald-headed men of 45. They wanted a mistress figure.

After a year of that, I decided it was a very unhealthy environment. I had finished my high school diploma at night school, so I went to college. In order to afford to go to college, my parents offered to give me the downstairs of their house to live in with Tracy, my daughter, and they would put me through college. I started college, majoring in art and had only been going for four months when I was offered my first joint. At that point, my life really began to change and a whole new awareness opened up. Soon after that, I did my first LSD, I had a whole spiritual awakening. I could not separate myself from the universe. I believed in God after that.

It started me on a spiritual path and I wanted to get close to



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nature - move out in the country. I finished my degree in art education. I really enjoyed my experiences with my friends in the art department, and most of the teachers. In late August 1969, Ecce, my best girlfriend, and I told our parents we were going camping in Pennsylvania and headed for California with my daughter. My daughter was about four then. From that point on, we've been sisters.

It was incredible to see the Rocky Mountains and the blue sky. I'd never seen a blue sky before for the smog. We wound up in San Francisco at the Fillmore at a Grateful Dead concert stoned on brown mescaline. If it hadn't been for my daughter Tracy, we would never have found the car again.

We got back to Baltimore right before I was to start my first teaching job. When I was student teaching, my teacher gave me a very bad letter of recommendation and said that I would rather sit down and rap with my students about Woodstock than teach. I almost went to Woodstock, but I was working that weekend and didn't go.

I taught in the ghetto in Baltimore in a special ed school. But I couldn't go along with the establishment way of trying to coerce the kids into being quota-middle class. So I finished out that year and my girlfriend and I headed west, this time never to come back to Baltimore to live.

While camping in the Rocky Mountains, we met a black brother named Pumba who told us about a commune in California called Wheeler's Ranch. He was called Bullshit William then. But he was so stoned it was hard to understand him on directions of how to get there.

But eventually we wound up at Wheeler's ranch in Sonoma County. My girlfriend thought that Wheeler's was too radical and rowdy for her, so she left and went to Hawaii.



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I stayed at Wheeler's and lived down on the knoll. All kinds of people lived at Wheeler's from Buddhist monks to brown rivers and organic mechanics and all kinds of outlaws, crazies, all children of God. The houses on the land went from beautiful A-frames and homes and cabins to Christlike little lot out of black plastic. It was a really high experience. I learned how to cook on a wood stove, survive on brown rice and wild plants.

I learned how to truly love all my brothers and sisters and to share and care as a family. Everyone was free to be whoever they wanted to be. And we learned - "What goes around comes around". A really fine drug was brought to the land by the Hell's Angels called Mellow Jello. It was organic extract of sassafras. It was so high and pure that we all did it together, even the kids and dogs. My daughter did some.

I lived at Wheeler's with a man named Dirty Dan. It was a nasty relationship, but it was valuable, for him as well as me. It only lasted a few months. I learned things from it - like you don't need to live with someone just to be living with someone.

My daughter was now called Grasshopper. She really grew up a lot at Wheeler's. She had a lot of good experiences that gave her such a lot more independence than most children her age.

In 1972, my life just changed completely. We first heard of the Rainbow Gathering from the Rainbow Oracle. A copy of it was sent to Wheeler's and everybody read it. I knew I had to go, even though my mother was having eye surgery and wanted me to come back to Baltimore.

Grasshopper and I left Wheeler's to go to the gathering. About 20 or 30 people went in many small parties, a lot of us hitchhiking. Me and three other sisters were looking for a ride to the gathering. One day a brother just walked up to me and said he had a ride for me and two other people. So we snuck



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across a neighboring rancher's land at night to the river. At that time the neighbor was at war with Wheeler's because once someone broke out on acid at Wheeler's and ran naked over to this guy's ranch and scared his cattle. Or people at Wheeler's cars would break down on the road and he couldn't get past. He would shoot at people.

But we made it to the gathering in Colorado in fine style. When we got to the gathering parking lot, there were about 2,000 people there. There were tipis and drums. When we went to the first council in the parking lot, Barry Plunker was speaking and even though the road blocks were up, the spirit was very strong. We were all gonna make it to the mountains. We tried a couple of times to ride in caravans as far as the river and then hike up the river, but we were turned back by state troopers with rifles pointed at our chests.

Finally we tried one more time. It was 3:30 in the morning - a group of about 60 of us with Garrick in front with maps and compass. We snuck right through the middle of town and in the middle of Main Street, my sandals broke and my pack broke. But we all made it to the railroad tracks and from that point on, I hiked barefoot. We ran silently along the tracks, I said a prayer that my feet be protected as we ran. We reached the boundary of the national forest at dawn. Garrick had the map and sort of knew where he was going. He was in a hurry because of a court case involving the Family in Denver that day. Garrick left us in the dust. We split up in many groups wandering up this hill and down that stream. I was amazed that my daughter could keep up as well as she did and in fact had more energy than most grown people.

One brother we were lost with for a while had nothing with him but his saxophone, which he had great



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fun echoing off the canyon walls. At one point we were going through marshlands deeper than our knees with huge swarms of mosquitoes. We had to hide under bushes when we heard airplanes and try not to be out in the open too much. After about 15 hours, by some miracle, we made it to the gathering site.

The first person I saw who was greeting people at the bottom of the trail was a sister I lived with at Wheeler's.

There were other brothers and sisters greeting us at the trail, welcoming us and carrying our packs to the main camp. It was late afternoon when we got to the Rainbow Kitchen, where we were fed pancakes and slept for a couple of hours right by the kitchen. I saw Sunny for the first time at that kitchen and fell in love with her before we'd even met.

I'd never experienced anything like this gathering. The vibes were so clear and high, it was like being on acid all the time, except much better. I could actually see people's auras that I met walking down the trail. I camped at a different place each night for a couple of nights and then found the Wheeler's camp near Harmony Kitchen.

One day I was cooking pancakes at Love Kitchen and there was a council going on next to the kitchen. There were TV folks from Denver there televising it and we just kept cooking as long as anyone was hungry. And somebody came up and handed me a bit of orange sunshine. I didn't even think about it and just popped it in my mouth and kept on cooking. After a while I started coming on to the acid and I couldn't keep it together to cook any more. So I turned my spatula over to somebody else and wandered off down the trail. At that point I actually felt brought down by the acid because I wanted to be in the kitchen helping and couldn't think of anything else I would rather do.

But then I met a brother on the trail whom I hadn't seen for



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several months. We hugged in greeting and pretty soon someone else came along and joined our hug and then it seemed like just about everybody who walked down the trail came along and hugged with us. Pretty soon I was in the middle of a hug ball with about 20 or 30 people. That hug ball lasted for about three hours at least. We were chanting and OMing and singing. People would come and go. When it finally broke up, we had to come back into the middle again and hug about three or four times.

On the night of July 3, many, many of us began a pilgrimage for eight miles from camp site to Table Mountain. We walked all the way to the foot of Table Mountain that night, some people carrying candles. My daughter had decided to stay at the camp at Strawberry Lake. At sunrise I walked to the top of Table Mountain where I sat and prayed silently and ate three peyote buttons. By mid-morning it seemed like there were a couple of thousand people on top of the mountain. At noon we all sat in silent meditation together, each of us praying from our hearts in our own ways, praying for peace, for world-wide brotherhood and sisterhood, giving thanks to our heavenly father and to honor our earth mother.

Later, that afternoon, everyone prayed in whatever way they felt. Some folks were Sufi dancing, some were dancing and singing peyote chants. There was a Tibetan holy man. He had a banner that said LOVE on one side and PEACE on the other. In the late afternoon, many people were leaving the mountain to go back to the camp. I felt very strongly that I wanted to stay on the mountain even if I didn't have my sleeping bag with me. I joined a circle of folks around a pyramid of stones from all lands and added two rainbow stones from my



pocket that I carried from Wheeler's. The pile of rocks was beautiful. There was even an old trumpet that had been found on top of the mountain and some deer horns and necklaces of turquoise and coral.

We passed around home-grown ganja in the ceremony and Barry Plunker told the story of the Rainbow while playing on his plunker. Just before sunset, those of us who were left walked to the very tippy top of the mountain. On the way we found a conga drum and a down sleeping bag. We sat on the very top of the mountain and looked over this incredible valley with the snow peaked Rockies all around. Barry played the conga and we sang in the sunset.

Just after dusk, I looked up in the sky and saw what looked like the evening star. I watched transfixed as it got brighter and brighter. My mind and heart were completely open and at peace and I began to receive a telepathic message from the object. They said, "We have come in peace to help you. We cannot fully materialize yet because the rest of the world is not ready for it. We have been watching you and what you have done has raised the planetary vibration of the entire world. It is very important for you to continue your work and when the time is right, we will come back." And then this incredible luminous light that had been communicating with me seemed to vaporize. When I looked at my friends, I realized I was the only one who had seen this. So I didn't tell them what I had just experienced. That night Barry and I stayed up on the mountain and shared the same sleeping bag.

The next day Barry went back to the parking lot and I went back to the camp at Strawberry Lake. The next day I noticed a really beautiful brother who got up and spoke concerning the clean-up plans. Later that afternoon at Harmony Kitchen, I noticed that same brother serving beans. As he was dishing



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me up some beans, our eyes met and I said "You're beautiful," and he answered, "It's just a reflection."

Later that night, that same brother just walked up to our campfire and started playing the guitar. At that point we both felt we were supposed to be together, and I had this incredible feeling that our vibrations were totally harmonious with each other. We spent our first night together in one big bed - we all put our sleeping bags together because my friend Annie had been cold and we decided to all sleep together. There were about 15 of us all piled together, including kids and babies and dogs and we laughed and carried on like a junior high slumber party. When we finally settled down for the night, somebody let a fart and it started all over again.

The brother's name was Jay Sun and we really felt that we were soul mates for life. I had left Wheeler's with very little money and I had only \$10 left. It got ripped off. The next day we helped with the cleanup and I spent all day burying people's shit and I filled a whole burlap sack full of used toilet paper and dirty socks. I enjoyed the day very much and chanted to myself and at the end of the day, lo and behold I found a \$10 bill. Jay Sun and Grasshopper and I broke camp the next day and headed down to the town of Granby. We got to the laundromat and ran into Barry and Sunny. It was quite a reunion, because we had all met individually at the gathering.

We went to a restaurant next door and the owner of the restaurant came and sat down with us. He had been completely turned on by the gathering. He had fallen in love with a young sister from the gathering and had had his ears pierced. He said he was really in love for the first time and there were brothers and sisters from the gathering washing dishes and waiting tables.



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Barry sang the story of the Grasshopper and the Ant on the phonograph in honor of my daughter Grasshopper. Somebody hollered from the bar that an hour special on the gathering was coming on TV so we all went in the bar and watched it. When we finally headed out on the road toward Denver, we all knew that we would meet again soon. It was illegal to hitch hike in Colorado at that time, but one of the state troopers had gotten up at council at the gathering and explained exactly how we could hitch hike without getting busted by walking 12 feet from the highway with a sign on our back. We stopped in Denver at a friend's who used to live at Wheeler's and we all took baths.

The last ride we got out of Colorado was with an off-duty state trooper. He took us right to the state line, averaging about 95 miles an hour. He was really nice and warned us to look out for the sheriff of Raton, New Mexico. When we reached Cuba, New Mexico, there were Jay's friends that he had been living with, Ron and Sasha, so we had a ride out out to Jay's camp site.

We lived on the land of a really fine brother who was an incredible horseman and cowboy. Our camp was about a mile from his house among some beautiful huge boulders. We built a horse corral among the rocks and trained two wild mustangs. We named our horse Weshawnee, which means Red Girl in Sioux. The first time we rode her, we split a hit of acid. Each of us took turns riding her bareback with just a halter. She was very gentle. Later that evening, I rode her to water and she saw her herd of wild horses coming down to water and took off like a bat out of hell and I made a one-point landing on a rock.

We stayed there for about a month. It was a really wonderful experience - sleeping next to our horse, running around naked in thunder showers taking a bath where the water ran off a rock. Then I decided to hitch back to Wheeler's to check up on my garden and my family there.



So Grasshopper and I had really great rides and a fine adventure, meeting many people on the road who had been to the gathering. My dope garden at Wheeler's was fine. It hadn't been eaten by deer or ripped off by anyone. I harvested the dope. That was a good harvest for sure. I stayed at Wheeler's about three weeks. While I was there, I went on a week fast, taking nothing but water. I felt very high and light and had a lot of energy while I was fasting.

Then Grasshopper flew to Baltimore to visit my parents and I hitched back to New Mexico. When I got back, Jayson and Ron and Sasha moved to town and Jayson was working on putting together a Volkswagen bus for us to go to California, so I worked at a local truck stop as a waitress and Jayson worked on the bus at a local freak garage called the B-1. When the bus was together, we rented a small U-haul trailer and converted it into a horse trailer. So we headed for Wheeler's with Weshawee, our horse, in back. One night out in the desert, we slept near the bus and woke up to find our horse sleeping right next to us with her head on the pillow.

When we got to Wheeler's, we had to walk in through the neighboring land, which was owned by a group of musicians. We couldn't go in through the main road, because our access had been cut off by the neighboring ranchers.

It was almost sunset, but I was really anxious to get to our house, which was a  $2\frac{1}{2}$  mile hike down a real steep canyon and up a real steep canyon on deer trails. I was riding the mare and Jayson was walking, carrying our stuff and the guitar. It was getting dark and just starting to sprinkle and the trail was getting slippery. By the time we got to the creek, Jayson was acting really up tight and strange like I'd never seen him before. We were



going through thick brush country, and Jayson was flashing back on Vietnam. Our mare was getting more and more freaked out. She was slipping and sliding in the mud.

We got about two thirds of the way up the canyon, up a very steep dangerous trail, and finally we couldn't get the horse to budge another inch. We were only about 100 yards from my house at Wheeler's, so we decided to tie our mare to a nearby bush and go ahead up to the house to drop our packs and come back and get her. As soon as we got our stuff to the house, we headed back for the horse. When we were about halfway to our horse, I think she heard our voices and started prancing around. Clyde, our dog, started barking and ran down the trail ahead of us. We scrambled down the trail as fast as we could in the dark and the rain. When we got to the place where she had been standing, all we found was a taut rope, which Jayson cut immediately and her body slumped to the ground. A broken neck. It took three days to bury her. We had to dig a hole in solid rocks with picks.

We stayed at Wheeler's for a few months. It felt different from before. It didn't feel together. Some childhood friends of mine came from the East Coast. They had some Mellowello I had sent them the year before and they didn't want to take it and they gave it to Jayson and I and we took it and reached a new level of truth and love. Before, we hadn't been able to communicate about sexually. We had been embarrassed, but after this we didn't have inhibitions.

We headed up the coast from Wheeler's and ended up staying in Point Arena for a couple of months with Grasshopper. I had a miscarriage and had to go to the hospital. We stayed on a commune there and helped build a geodesic dome and helped work in their candle factory. We went with a group of folks from Point Arena to Fort Bragg, California, for a Cat Mother and the Newsboys concert. Everybody danced, it was real fun. We met Rob Roy and Barry



and Reggie and Leika Fawn there. We went over to where they were staying after the dances and there was sunny too. We decided to move up near Albion and stay in the Palace with the Family.

We had a big Thanksgiving '72 feast that lasted three days and nights with bear stew and four turkeys and red snapper and ham and music and dancing. We had a really high peyote meeting after Thanksgiving. Sunny saw a hawk hovering behind and above Jayson's head. Right in the middle of the meeting, we bundled up in a car with conga drums and went to the Albion Community Center and did the first showing of a movie from the '72 gathering that Mark White Buffalo shot. Everybody loved it. We showed it two times and sang and chanted.

After that, we went down to Mill Valley and made a sound track for the gathering movie. We stayed in this incredibly big mansion on a hill. The night before the sound session, Barry brought over an incredible Puerto Rican musician named Ricky that he had met. He played the standing harp and the guitar like an angel. I could really feel that he was a true vessel of God's love through his music. There were about 30 of us in the house who had come from all over.

In order to feed everybody, we made trash runs to the dumpsters. We all went to Haight Ashbury to a recording studio. A lot of us had done acid and everybody had an instrument. Sunny and I went out in an alley and got some bottles so we could blow on them. The music was really incredible and it felt to me like the studio was levitating, spiraling about two miles above San Francisco. Some of us were reciting verses for the sound track, reciting poems and prayers.

Mark had a whole script laid out - like Jayson and I did the spoken part. a scene called "Ye Olde Hill Top Shitter."



There was this couple on the shitter - the boy at one end and the girl at the other and she says "Oh honey, would you bring the paper over here" and he hops on over with his pants still down.

But when we were playing the music and really got into this incredible free-flowing jam, Mark White Buffalo freaked out because it didn't leave enough room for the script. Mark tried to get us to stop. Barry got mad and split. The sound track got made and Mark showed the movie around.

We went back to the Palace at Albion. We only stayed a little while longer. Barry and Sunny went back to Montana. It was raining a lot, and Jayson was homesick for New Mexico, so we decided to go back. We got back in the middle of winter. We had no boots, no mittens, bald tires, no chains. But we ended up finding a ranch to live on way out in the boondocks about 15 miles from Lindrith, New Mexico, on a dirt road. The snow was so deep when we got there that we had to be towed into the ranch. There was a horse on our land that our neighbors were supposed to be feeding and the snow got so deep that they couldn't even feed their own stock and we had to watch the horse starve to death.

There was only one other kid around besides Grasshopper, so she wanted to go to school so she could have some friends. So I used to walk her three miles down our driveway to the main dirt road to wait for the four-wheel drive school bus. Then I'd walk back to meet her at the end of the day. I discovered I was pregnant at the time.

Lindrith was really beautiful and it was nice to have a home. We put in a half-acre garden in the spring. We got a post card that the 1973 Gathering was going to be in the Wind River Wilderness in Wyoming. About a month before the gathering my parents sent us some money to get married on, so we decided to get married.



All different kinds of people came - farmers and cowboys and old loners and freak friends, neighbors. We gathered a big bouquet of wild flowers, every color of the rainbow and then we hiked about a half a mile away to the top of an incredible Indian mound where people had lived and been buried a thousand years ago. We said our own ceremony and explained standing in a circle and singing to people who had never done it before. We read prayers and poems from the Rainbow Oracle. One of our friends was a Universal Life minister and he signed the papers. Then we had a fine party that lasted three days.

We got some neighbors to take care of our garden, then we went to the gathering. We had some difficulty finding the place, because the spot had been changed. It was a really incredible gathering, a beautiful spot for it. There was a piano in the first kitchen and some people who really knew how to play it. The river was cold and clear. We camped by the river with Barry and Sunny. We saw elk. I really felt a strong communion with the other sisters at the gathering. That was one of the best gatherings.

After the Wyoming Gathering, we gave many people a ride back to New Mexico. There was one brother who had what looked like cold sores on his lips. I told him it looked contagious and would he please keep his water together. He didn't keep his water together. He drank out of my canteen and after we came home, I came down with herpes and I was eight months pregnant. I was very sick for the last month of my pregnancy and because of the herpes, I had to have a Caesarian. It was a really incredible experience to watch. The doctors gave me spinals so I was conscious.